

**SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

**Harrisburg Public School
Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process Report 2003-2004**

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Date of Report: February 17th, 2004

This report contains the results of the steering committee's self-assessment and the validation of the self-assessment by the Special Education Programs. The report addresses six principles – General Supervision, Free Appropriate Public Education, Appropriate Evaluation, Procedural Safeguards, Individualized Education Program and Least Restrictive Environment. Each principle is rated based on the following scale:

Promising Practice	The district/agency exceeds this requirement through the implementation of innovative, high-quality programming and instructional practices.
Meets Requirements	The district/agency consistently meets this requirement.
Needs Improvement	The district/agency has met this requirement but has identified areas of weakness that left unaddressed may result in non-compliance.
Out of Compliance	The district/agency consistently does not meet this requirement.
Not applicable	In a small number of cases, the standard may not be applicable for your district/agency. If an item is not applicable, the steering committee should briefly explain why the item is NA. Example – no private schools within the district boundaries.

Principle 1 – General Supervision
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General supervision means the school district's administrative responsibilities to ensure federal and state regulations are implemented and a free appropriate public education is provided for each eligible child with a disability. The specific areas addressed in principle one are child find, referral procedures, children voluntarily enrolled by parents in private schools, students placed by the school district, improving results through performance goals and indicators (assessment, drop out, graduation), professional development, suspension and expulsion rates.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- Comprehensive plan

- Student Assistance Team (SAT)
- Parent, teacher and administrator survey results
- Referrals
- Publications of child find notices
- Yearly child find information
- File reviews
- Parental rights brochure
- Student Information Management System (SIMS)
- Stanford achievement testing results
- Alternate assessment results
- State testing results
- Progress indicators on Individual Education Programs (IEPs)
- State data tables – A, B, C, D, and F
- Average Yearly Progress (AYP) report
- Discipline records
- Behavior intervention plans
- Cornbelt Cooperative's functional behavior assessment manual
- Workshops and inservices
- Employee handbook
- Board policies
- No Child Left Behind legislation
- Personnel records
- Paraprofessional and professional inservice opportunities

Promising practice

The steering committee concluded the following areas as promising practices: student assistance team, staff development and reading specialist.

Staff members, when dealing with students exhibiting difficulties consult the Student Assistance Team.

Staff development is provided as needed to meet the needs of those individual students. For example, members of the South Dakota Learning Disability Association (SDLDA) were brought in to teach staff members about learning disabilities and modifications. The district paid for any interested staff member to attend the SDLDA state conference in Sioux Falls. All teachers in kindergarten through grade five will be trained in the South Dakota Reads program, so that they may address individual needs and reading levels.

The district has hired a full-time reading specialist to assist in the development and training of effective instructional strategies for general and special education personnel.

Meets requirements

The Harrisburg School District has an identified system for receiving documented referrals. The district has surveyed groups involved in the child find activities and has reviewed files. The district has policies and procedures which address this issue. The district has file reviews, surveys, and documentation supporting their referral procedures as specified through state regulations and school policies.

The Harrisburg School District follows state policies and procedures and the comprehensive plan regarding the placement and services of students voluntarily enrolled by parents in private schools. Parents and district staff are always involved in meetings and decisions pertaining to child placement, including cases when a child with disabilities would be placed in a private school or facility. The school

district provides these services at no cost to the parent. The district has evidence of appropriate policies and procedures through the file reviews, surveys, and adherence to the rules, regulations, and state approved comprehensive plan.

The district uses the relevant school data to analyze and review progress toward the state performance goals and indicators.

The district follows and adheres to the state guidelines for reporting of students, with or without disabilities, who have been suspended, expelled, or who have dropped out, and reports accurate data to the state.

All staff meets minimum requirements for employment. Table B of the school district state report indicates the district employs and contracts with personnel who are fully licensed or certified to work with children with disabilities. The district adheres to district policies and procedures for the appropriate supervision of these individuals. The district utilizes the comprehensive plan, local and state policies and regulations, and staff needs to fulfill personnel development needs. Staff surveys indicate training opportunities are available to all staff. Additional training opportunities are approved on an as-needed basis for each individual staff member.

Validation Results

Promising practice

The review team validated that the Harrisburg School District has a student assistance team, which meets to help students who are exhibiting difficulties in school. The team meets and gives the teachers ideas on modifications to help the student succeed. In interviews, non-veteran teachers were particularly positive about the assistance that comes from this team.

The review team validated the reading specialist as a promising practice. The success of the reading specialist in the district has prompted a second reading specialist to be recently hired to expand the expertise of this program. In addition, the district has had a tutor on staff for the past few years. The tutor is responsible for assisting seventh and eighth graders with academic needs. Students may be referred to the tutor program by staff or parents for additional academic assistance.

The monitoring team was not able to validate staff development as a promising practice. The provision of staff development is a requirement. Staff interviews indicated that staff development is comparable to other districts in the state.

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with the steering committee that the district is meeting requirements for Principle One, General Supervision.

Principle 2 – Free Appropriate Public Education

All eligible children with disabilities are entitled to a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. The specific areas addressed in principle two are the provision of FAPE to children residing in group homes, foster homes, or institutions, making FAPE available when a child reaches his/her 3rd birthday and providing FAPE to eligible children with disabilities who have been suspended or expelled from school for more than 10 cumulative days.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- File reviews

- Child count information
- Screening information
- Referral information
- Staff and parent surveys
- Special education budget information
- State tables A, B, C, E, F
- Discipline records
- Behavior intervention plans
- Suspension/Expulsion data
- Administrator input
- Cornbelt Cooperative's functional behavior assessment manual

Promising practice

The Harrisburg School District provides specially designed classrooms for students with more involved needs. In the elementary, the district has one Exceptional Learning Center that utilizes Discrete Trial Training and PECS. One-on-one assistance in the general education classrooms allows students to attend and participate in activities with same-age peers within their home district. The district, also has a Life Skills Classroom in the high school for young adults needing direct instruction on vocational skills and independent living skills.

Meets requirements

Parent surveys indicate that 100% of the parents believe that the district provides an appropriate placement and education for their children in accordance with Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). Services are provided at no cost to parents. Related services and transportation expenses are at the cost of the district as indicated on each child's IEP.

A review of special education files and discipline records indicates that no students with disabilities have been suspended or expelled for more than 10 cumulative school days. However, policies and procedures are in place should this occur. Behavior intervention plans are monitored and revised as needed.

Validation Results

Promising practice

The monitoring team was not able to validate specially designed classrooms for students with more involved needs in the district as a promising practice. The provision of free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment is a requirement.

The district uses unique behavior techniques and incentives to develop positive student behaviors, which the monitoring team validated as a promising practice. The monitoring team observed the elementary Exceptional Learning Center teacher's technique of using visual clues/pictures as a way to monitor classroom behavior. Pictures (i.e. playing with a toy) are cut into four pieces, when the child displays appropriate behavior a piece is given to him/her when the picture is completed the child gets to do that activity. Interviews with staff indicated that the Exceptional Learning Center elementary teacher assists other teachers with using positive behavior management techniques in the general classroom. Another behavior technique observed in the district was in the elementary resource classroom involved pets. Classroom members, whom a monitoring team member met, are Barney and Lucy, the classroom dog and guinea pig. Positive student interaction was observed between students and the classroom pets. Lucy is a full time member of the classroom, and Barney comes to school two days a week. Students enjoy reading to Barney and Lucy and being rewarded time out with the pets for some fun time. The pets in the resource room have made the classroom a positive place to come for extra academic help and to check on Barney and Lucy.

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with the steering committee that the district is meeting the requirement for Principle Two, Free Appropriate Public Education.

Principle 3 – Appropriate Evaluation

A comprehensive evaluation is conducted by a team of knowledgeable staff, which also includes parental input. A valid and reliable evaluation will result in effective individualized education programs for eligible students. The specific areas addressed in principle three are written notice and consent for evaluation, evaluation procedures and instruments, eligibility determination, reevaluation and continuing eligibility.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- File reviews
- Evaluation reports
- Comprehensive plan
- SAT procedural outline
- Override information
- Referral and evaluation checklist
- List of assessments currently used in the district
- Survey results
- State data table G and H

Meets requirements

The Harrisburg School District always uses more than one evaluation tool to determine eligibility. Parents are contacted by phone prior to permission to evaluate forms and parental input forms being sent out. Parents/guardians are given the opportunity to give input into the evaluation procedures. The file reviews reflected that 87% of the parents returned parental input for evaluation forms and 95% of the files reflected a completed functional assessment as part of the evaluation process.

File reviews indicate that the district completes valid and reliable evaluations that are in compliance with the rules. The district has policies and procedures aligned with state and federal regulations in this area. One hundred percent of files reviewed indicate the district completes valid and reliable evaluations. One hundred percent of students placed on IEPs were determined to be eligible for services through the evaluation process.

Based on the file reviews, 100% of the initial evaluations and 100% of the re-evaluations completed by school district personnel indicated that parental consent for evaluations was obtained. Policies and procedures pertaining to written notice and informed parental consent are in place and follow both federal and state regulations and procedures.

The Harrisburg School District met the requirements for evaluation or reevaluation in 100% of the files reviewed. The district follows the state administrative rules pertaining to evaluation or reevaluation procedures and instruments selected for testing.

Policies and procedures, file reviews and parental surveys indicate the IEP team considers all evaluations to determine a category of disability. According to 100% of the file reviews, documentation pertaining to eligibility is provided to the parents 100% of the time.

The Harrisburg School District follows policies and procedures for proper reevaluation requirements. All students are appropriately evaluated and meet the state eligibility criteria to maintain their participation for special education and related services or are dismissed from services.

Needs improvement

In 38 of 43 files reviewed, reevaluations were conducted within the three-year reevaluation timeline.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with the steering committee that the district is meeting the requirement for Principle Three, Appropriate Evaluation with the exception of evaluation procedures (determination of needed evaluation data, and functional assessment). See information under: Out of Compliance

Needs improvement

The monitoring team validated the need to improve reevaluation timelines. In two of the sixteen files reviewed by the monitoring team, three-year reevaluation timelines were not met. Through interviews with special education teachers, concerns were expressed as to what date should be noted as the three-year reevaluation date. The district is aware of this issue and has taken steps to make improvements. Another issue noted by the monitoring team is meeting the initial or reevaluation timeline when the 25-day timeline is extend.

In thirteen of fourteen student files reviewed by the monitoring team, the psychological evaluation report indicated that the Human Figure Drawing was administered during the evaluation; however, the report did not include results of this evaluation. The district needs improvement in reporting accurate information to the parents. Also, when a young child is given a developmental evaluation, the information given to parents on the prior notice/consent does not reflect the area(s) of development to be evaluated (i.e. cognitive, physical, communication, social/emotional and adaptive functioning skills). A statement of the developmental areas to be evaluated on the prior notice/consent would provide parents a clearer understanding of the action being proposed.

File reviews completed by the monitoring team indicated that early childhood functional evaluation is limited to parent input. The information is documented with a checklist, which is not consistently completed. Interviews with staff indicated that additional functional (skill based) information gathered during the evaluation would be helpful in determining an appropriate education program for students.

The district is required to ensure that a variety of assessment tools and strategies are used to gather relevant functional and development information about the child. In six of fourteen student files reviewed, the monitoring team found the evaluation used to determine eligibility was also used as documentation for functional skill information. In doing so, the monitoring team was not able to verify that a variety of assessment tools and strategies were used with students grades kindergarten through twelve to gather relevant functional and development information about the child during the evaluation. The monitoring team conducted a student file review with the special education coordinator that determined additional relevant functional and developmental information (i.e. student work samples, etc.) would be helpful in determining an appropriate education program for students.

Out of compliance

ARSD 24:05:25:02 Determination of needed evaluation data

As part of an initial or reevaluation, the individual education program team and other individuals with knowledge and skills necessary to interpret evaluation data determine what evaluation data is needed to support eligibility and the child's special education needs.

In all student files reviewed, with the exception of speech/language and early childhood, the monitoring team found that students were given a Behavior Assessment for Children (BASC). Interviews with the special education coordinator indicated the Cornbelt Cooperative has directed the district to complete behavior assessments on all students suspected of a disability in which a psychological evaluation is requested. The behavior assessment is completed as a precautionary step in the event of long-term suspension of the student. Based on this information, the monitoring team concluded that the district does not consider the child's individual needs when making the determination of needed evaluation data.

ARSD 24:05:25:10 Prohibitions concerning identification of specific learning disabilities

The team may not identify a child as having a specific learning disability if the severe discrepancy between ability and achievement is primarily the result of a visual, hearing, or motor disability, mental retardation, emotional disturbance, or environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage. On the district's Multidisciplinary Evaluation team report form, which is completed to determine whether a child has a specific learning disability, the content is not based on regulation language. Statement number five reads, "The team has determined that the student's difficulties are not primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor handicap, mental handicap, emotional disturbance of autism." Interviews with special education staff indicated they were unaware as to why the statement had, "of autism" added to it, which is not regulation language.

Principle 4 – Procedural Safeguards

Parents of children with disabilities have certain rights available. The school makes parents aware of these rights and makes sure they are understood. The specific areas addressed in principle four are adult student/transfer of rights, content of rights, consent, written notice, confidentiality and access to records, independent educational evaluation (IEE), complaint procedures, and due process hearings.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- File Reviews
- Comprehensive plan
- Parental rights brochure
- Prior notice forms
- State handbook
- State website listing records of filed complaints
- Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

Meets requirements

The Harrisburg School District follows policies and regulation requirements to ensure notification to parents of their rights. The district has training, policies, and procedures regarding surrogate parents to ensure the rights of a child are protected if no parent can be identified.

The district has policies and procedures in place to ensure parents fully understand what activity is being sought prior to obtaining consent. The district's policies and procedures provide parents with the opportunity to inspect and review all educational records concerning their child in accordance with the provision of a free and appropriate public education and family education rights and privacy act.

The district has policies and procedures to address complaint issues. The district makes a good faith effort to resolve disputes before any request for due process is made. Federal and state rules and regulations pertaining to due process procedures are followed. The districts due process procedure steps are described in the comprehensive plan starting on page 55.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with the steering committee that the district is meeting the requirement for Principle Four, Procedural Safeguards.

Principle 5 – Individualized Education Program

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a written document for a child with a disability that is developed, reviewed and revised by the IEP team, which includes the parent. The specific areas addressed in principle five are IEP team, IEP content, transition components for secondary IEPs, annual reviews, transition from early intervention program, and IEP related issues.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- Comprehensive plan
- Student progress reports
- Budget information
- Survey results
- File reviews
- Personnel training
- Progress data sheets
- Child count information
- Special Education handbook

Promising practice

The steering committee concluded as a promising practice that the Harrisburg School District has hired a Special Education Coordinator to contact parents and outside agencies to set up mutually agreed upon meeting dates, times and to complete the prior notice forms.

Also the use of technology in the district was noted as a promising practice by the steering committee.

Meets requirements

The Harrisburg School District has policies and procedures in place in the comprehensive plan to ensure for the provision of an appropriate IEP team. One hundred percent of students of transition age were invited to attend their IEP meeting. File reviews indicate IEP procedures are being followed and the district meets requirements. One hundred percent of the files reviewed show that prior notices contain all required content.

The district has procedures and policies in place to ensure IEPs are appropriately developed and in place for each eligible student. The district utilizes an IEP form that ensures each student's IEP contains the required content. One hundred percent of the files reviewed indicated there were measurable annual goals. Ninety percent had required content for short-term objectives. One hundred percent of the files reviewed indicated modifications and accommodations were addressed in the students IEPs. Ninety-nine percent of the IEPs indicated the district appropriately addressed student progress. One hundred percent of the file reviews showed that IEPs were reviewed on or before the annual IEP review date.

Needs improvement

The present levels of performance in students IEPs do not consistently address required content. This is an area that the special education team is addressing starting in the fall of 2003.

The Modifications page indicated, “as needed” for frequency in testing situations. Thirty percent of files reviewed used “as needed” as a frequency statement for modifications.

Transition assessments and present levels of performance did not meet the criteria for transition services. Course of study was identified in 20 out of 25 (80%) of students IEPs who are age 14 and older.

Validation Results

Promising practice

The monitoring team validated the district’s action to hire a special education coordinator as a promising practice. The addition of this position has been beneficial to meet the needs of children with special needs.

The monitoring team validated the use of technology in the district as a promising practice. The district is breaking new ground in the use of the state IEP form on the Dakota Digital Network Campus, which is a computerized program to maintain individualized student data on the Internet. Information contained within the student’s profile includes obtained grades and attendance records. This information is pass-code protected and can be accessed at any time by the student, his/her teacher(s), and the student’s parents.

Also noted through interviews with general education teachers as a promising practice in the technology area, was the district’s state technology plan. The district’s plan includes a reward system for teachers to improve in learning technology skills and integrating technology into the curriculum. Rewards are acquired as a teacher completes the second and then third level. Rewards for advancing to a higher level may include:

- A one-time monetary reward of \$500.00 upon completing Level 2, and \$500.00 upon completing Level 3.
- First opportunity for attending off-campus professional development workshops.
- Additional planning time for developing technology integration lessons during the school day. The district provides a substitute teacher for his/her classroom.
- First in line for new hardware/software/peripheral devices.

Staff interviews indicated the cash reward has been a positive incentive for teachers.

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with the steering committee that the district is meeting the requirement for Principle Five, Individualized Education Program, except in the areas of IEP content and transition. See information under: Out of Compliance

Needs improvement

The monitoring team addresses present levels of performance, along with transition services under out of compliance. The monitoring team was not able to validate the concerns identified by the district regarding transition assessments.

The monitoring team agrees with the steering committee that documentation as to the frequency of modification needs to address specific amount of time and not state “as needed” on student IEPs. The district has made staff aware of this issue and the monitoring team in recently written IEPs noticed changes.

Out of compliance

ARSD 24:05:27:01.03 Content of individualized education program

A student’s IEP must contain present levels of performance based upon the skill areas affected by the student’s identified disability. The present levels of performance are based upon the functional assessment information gathered during the comprehensive evaluation process. In ten of fifteen student

files reviewed by the monitoring team, present levels of performance were not linked to functional evaluation and did not contain skill based strengths, needs or consistently addressed how the disability affects the child's involvement, progress in the general curriculum and parent input. In addition, the steering committee and monitoring team concluded that present levels of performances did not consistently address each disability area of concern.

The present levels of performance stated information that was not linked back to the functional assessment. For example, for a student whose disability was in written expression, the functional assessment stated, "Written expression skills, in general, are a relative weakness for _____. He/She has a wealth of ideas and is easily able to express those ideas in verbal form, but cannot get his/her meaning across as cohesively in a written manner. He/She used end punctuation sporadically throughout his/her written essay, but with no regard to whether he/she was identifying a sentence or not. Grammar, capitalization, and punctuation skills are all areas in which _____ could use some additional instruction and assistance."

From the above functional assessment information, the following present level of performance was written: "Strengths: Areas of strength were in vocabulary development, verbal expression, concept formations, mathematical concepts/computation, ability to analyze word problems, range of factual information, meaningful long-term memory, and ability to use and relate general life experiences.

"Needs: Some areas of concerns were in knowledge of English syntax, visual analysis, visual imagery and memory, spatial visualization, planning ability, sequencing or clustering strategies, visual motor coordination, attention, flexibility and time pressure.

"_____ is currently working in the general classroom for his/her academics, but is utilizing modifications made by the teacher to accommodate his/her ADHD. He/She also uses the resource room services to assist him/her in assignment completion."

ARSD 24:05:27:13:02 Transition services

Transition services are a coordinated set of activities for a student, designed within an outcome-oriented process, which promotes movement from school to post-school activities. The coordinated set of activities shall be based on the individual student's needs, taking into account the student's preferences and interests, and shall include instruction, related services, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives, and, if appropriate, the acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation.

In two of three student files reviewed that required transitional services, the present level of performance did not include evaluation information on transition needs of the student. This information (strengths, needs, etc.) is necessary to develop a coordinated set of activities. Transition plans written to address the five transition areas on the IEP form did not consistently state dates when activities would be initiated or completed. In the three student files reviewed, the district was unable to show that other agency representatives, who may be responsible for providing or paying for transition services were invited to the student's IEP meeting.

ARSD 24:05:27:04 Determination of related services

In deciding whether a particular developmental corrective, or other supportive service is a related service, the members of the IEP team shall review the results of the individual evaluations used to determine the child's need for special education. Based on the specific special education services to be provided, the team shall determine whether related services are required in order to implement the special education program being recommend. In one student file reviewed by the monitoring team, counseling was addressed as a related service, but no goals or objectives were written as part of the child's IEP.

ARSD 24:05:27:01.02 Development, review and revision of the IEP- Consideration of Special Factors

In three student files reviewed, behavioral assessment and/or present levels of performance contained information regarding the impact of student behavior on their educational performance. However, in developing the IEPs for these students, the team checked “no”, that the behavior does not impede learning and did not address strategies, including positive behavioral interventions and supports to address the behaviors.

Principle 6 – Least Restrictive Environment

After the IEP is developed or reviewed, the IEP team must decide where the IEP services are to be provided. Consideration begins in the general education classroom for school age students. The specific areas addressed in principle six are placement decisions, consent for initial placement, least restrictive environment procedures, preschool children, and LRE related issues.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- State Data Tables E, G, I, J, and F
- File reviews
- Survey results

Promising practice

A summary of the necessary modifications and accommodations is provided to each child’s regular education teacher(s) to maximize classroom participation.

Support services such as paraprofessional staff are provided when necessary for students to be included in the regular education classroom.

Meets requirements

The district has policies and procedures in place for addressing the Least restrictive environment (LRE) of students. Behavioral intervention plans have been written for students who require them. One hundred percent of files reviewed indicate that the students receive services in the LRE with appropriate supports to be successful.

Validation Results

Promising practice

The monitoring team was not able to validate modifications, accommodations and support staff as a promising practice. The provisions of these services are a requirement to ensure children in need of special education or special education and related services are educated in the least restrictive environment.

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with the steering committee that the district is meeting the requirements for Principle Six, Least Restrictive Environment.